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THE CLUB BINDERY OF NEW YORK & BY WILLIAM LORING ANDREWS



HE corporation which has taken to itself the short and simple title of "The Club Bindery," is not yet a twelvemonth old. Its history lies in the untried future, and in the field of American bibliopegy upon which it has entered its mettle is still to be tested and its spurs to be won. The shareholders' first annual meeting was held only a few weeks since. Examples of work executed at the Bindery were then and there displayed and duly admired and lauded by

those present. The financial statement which the directors presented failed to disclose the possibility of a dividend in the near future, and the shareholders were given to understand that the Club Bindery was striving for glory and not for gain. With this statement of the case, we who had invested our money in the enterprise, being all good true bibliophiles, were fain to be content.

The association was incorporated in August, 1895, by the following named gentlemen: Mr. E. B. Holden, Mr. Walter Gilliss, and Mr. Junius Morgan, who apportioned among themselves the offices of president, secretary, and treasurer, in the order in which their names appear above. These positions are by no means sinecures, and the duties thereof are cheerfully discharged by the incumbents "all for love and nothing for reward." At a very full meeting of the shareholders held on the evening of April 15, 1895, the number of directors was increased to five by the election of Mr. Beverly Chew and Mr. Marshall C. Lefferts, who, with Messrs. Holden, Gilliss, and Morgan, now constitute the board. The capital stock of the company is divided into shares of \$50.00 each, and has been widely distributed so as to enable as many individuals as possible to take advantage of the facilities offered by the bindery, as bibliopegic privileges are restricted (provisionally) to shareholders. Care was taken in the allotment of shares, that they should pass into the hands of those interested in the making of books, and the list of shareholders includes the names of all the prominent book collectors of the city of New York.

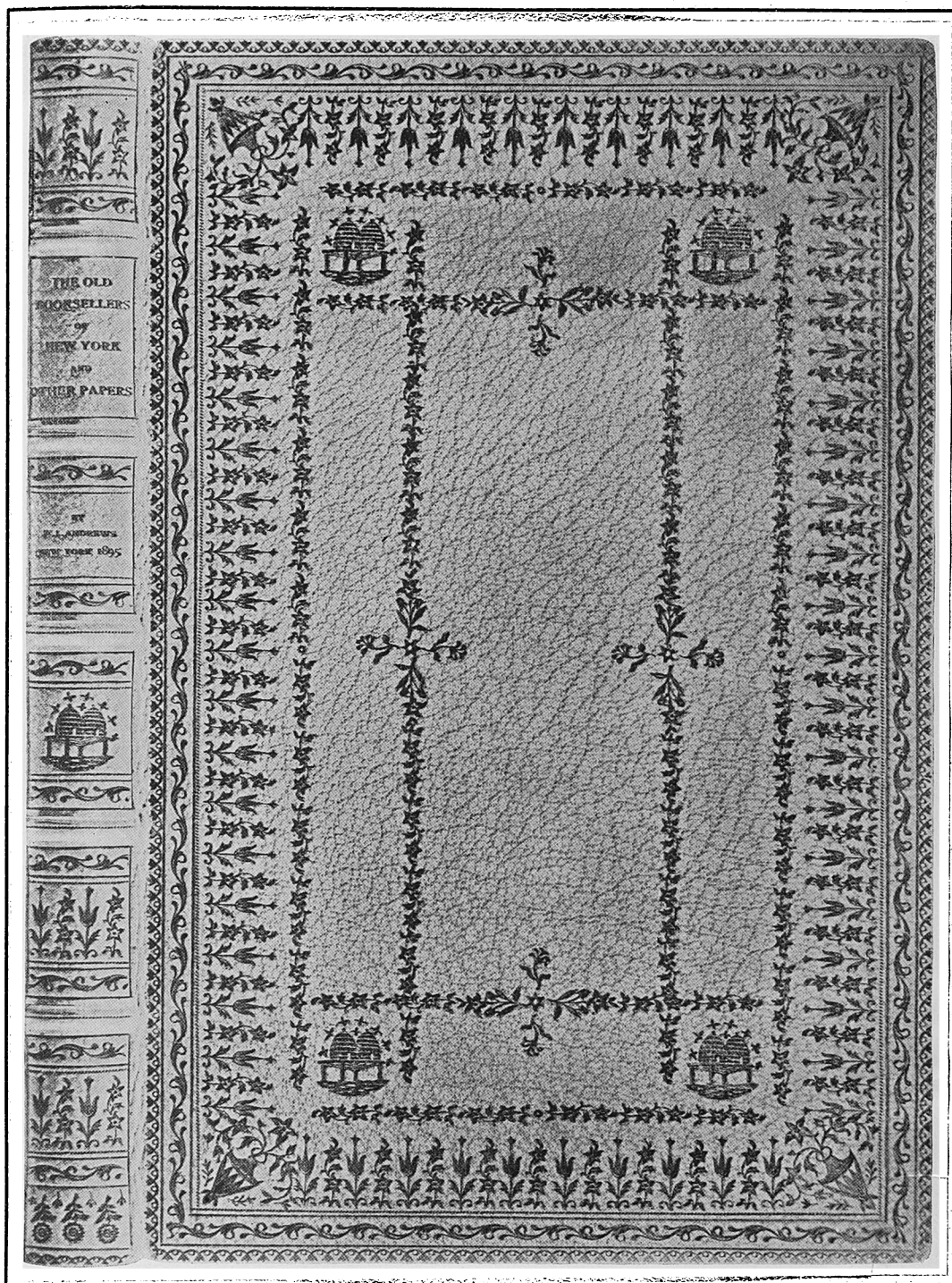
Although the Club Bindery devotes its chief attention to the finer class of work, it accepts and executes any description of binding from a simple "cartonnage" costing a dollar or less per volume, to a full bound tooled and inlaid crushed levant "couverture," with or without a doublure, the expense of which is limited only by the purse or caprice of the owner of the book to be bound. It has required time to organize the various branches of the business upon a satisfactory

THE CLUB basis, but the directors feel assured that the forwarding department
BINDERY of their establishment is now in the hands of an able corps of skill-
ful and experienced craftsmen, and they are quite confident that in
Mr. F. Mansell they have secured the services of the best designer
and finisher in this country. The abundant capital of the company
enables it to carry an ample stock of the best material of all kinds and
to take advantage of exceptional opportunities that may occur in
France or England to secure invoices of lining papers in varieties of
design, and binding leathers of superior quality and in choice shades
of color.

In one respect the managers have cause for deep regret. By the
very recent death of Mr. William Matthews they have lost a friend
and an adviser whose knowledge and experience has been, since the
incipiency of the undertaking, freely placed at their disposal by this
Nestor of the art of fine binding in America.

Artists of repute have been employed to furnish designs, in the
hope that on some red-letter day in the future the officers of the Club
Bindery may be able to exhibit to an admiring throng of bibliophiles
a unique and national style of book-cover decoration. We realize the
difficulty of this task when we remember that Mr. Matthews has stated
as the result of his long and careful study and practical experience,
that only eight distinct styles of binding have appeared since book-
binding became a specific art, viz., "the Aldine or early Italian," "the
Maoli or later Italian," "the Grolier," "the Eve," the "Le Gascon,"
"Derome," "Roger Payne," and the "Janseniste." I make bold to add
to this list the name of Cobden-Sanderson, and am thereby encouraged
to believe it possible that materialistic as is this age and country, a
genius may yet arise among us and develop an entirely original style
of decoration for the cover of a book. I do not believe, however, that
this creative spirit will descend through the portals of an artist's stu-
dio. It will come—if it come at all—to the "maitre doreur," the man
of long study and a true lover of his art, as with poised hand he bends
musingly over the book lying upon his work-bench, and in a moment
of inspiration traces upon it a medley of golden lines and circles,
scrolls and shields, which in a novel fashion transform the plain
leathern surface into a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

For some satisfactory reason, probably to suit the convenience of
its board of directors, which is composed of men engaged in active
business life, the Club Bindery sought and found its first home in the
most ancient quarter of the city, namely, upon that portion of Broad
Street between Beaver and Exchange Place, which in olden time
was a marshy common—known as the "Schaape Waytie" and used
by the good folk of New Amsterdam as a pasturage for sheep and
cattle. The building in the old "Prince Graft" (what a pity the eu-
phonious name was not retained!), in which the bindery is domiciled,



CLUB BINDERY—"Old Booksellers of New York"
 William Loring Andrews—Crushed light green Le-
 tooled in pale gray, having the effect of silver, by
 Russell.—Many of the tools used in the design were
 from an English binding executed about the
 of the eighteenth century.

stands near if not on historic ground. One hundred years ago the THE CLUB residence of Lord Stirling lay embowered in trees and shrubbery on BINDERY the block below, and two squares further towards the river Fraunce's Tavern, made famous by association with the name of Washington, still lifts its walls of long and narrow Holland brick, and constitutes the oldest landmark remaining in this city of continual architectural changes.

The comfortable quarters of this newly-fledged corporation are located on the fourth story of the building, and the ascent to them must be made by means of the stairway, as no elevator waits to convey the visitor to the top floor of the old-fashioned edifice, one of the few in this neighborhood which has not yet made way for a counterpart of the tower-like structures that overshadow it on every side, but it is only a temporary respite that the building which shelters the Bindery enjoys; even now it totters on the verge of demolition. Four small rooms accommodate the paraphernalia, but they are spacious apartments compared to those to which before now I have eagerly climbed to place a cherished volume in the hands of Cuzin of Paris. As this noted binder in his journeyman's blouse stood beside his workbench, a stride either way would have brought him into contact with one or the other of the four walls of his shop, and yet from the modest atelier of Francisque Cuzin and that of his still more famous confrère, Trautz Bauzonnet, what masterpieces of book-binding have gone forth to delight the hearts of book lovers the world over! A fine binding may be created in a very limited space, and with a scant equipment of tools and furniture, as a binding by Roger Payne proves beyond cavil to the present day and generation.

The prosaic brick and granite walls that surround the master workman and his companions, as they gather together in this upper chamber fronting upon one of the busiest streets of the metropolis of the New World, are in marked contrast to the environment of their predecessors, the old Venetian binders, the lattices of whose workshops opened upon the blue waters of the Adriatic, the Piazza and Basilica of San Marco, or upon some other of those lessons in the beautiful, sculptured in stone, with which the Doge's City of the sea abounds. In the ultra practical and extremely utilitarian world about them there is little to stimulate the aesthetic sense of these followers of the art of bibliopeggy at 31 Broad Street; still in the routine of their daily life there comes now and again a reminder of a dim religious past, when the nameless artisans who raised book-binding from a handicraft to an art, wrought out in monastic peace and quietness their beautiful designs. It comes through the sense of hearing, not of sight, as at matins and at evensong time, the chiming bells of Trinity peal out upon the air.



THE CLUB BINDERY—Double (inside of cover) for "A History of New York" by Diedrich Knickerbocker—Ground citron Levant morocco, inlay—White tulips with red stripes, leaves light and dark green—Designed by Louis J. Rhead, finished by F. Mansell.